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ABSTRACT

New York City's Special Education School Articulation Program, which fosters informed student and parent choice about available high school program options, is described. Initial program objectives for the 1990-91 school year included hiring of school articulation coordinators and development of specific articulation plans by middle and high schools. Evaluation indicated these objectives were met with some schools also implementing articulation activities. The instructional component of the program, implementation of special events (such as intervisitations), and parent involvement activities have been initiated. It was concluded by school program coordinators and the Borough articulation coordinators that the program has already had an important positive impact on students. Recommendations include planning of more boroughwide meetings for coordinators, improvement of within-school articulation activities, evaluation of the newly developed collaborative articulation conference, and reevaluation of the workload of school program coordinators. This document presents an executive summary of the program; an introduction presenting program background, objectives, and methodology; a discussion of the program concept; a report of specific program evaluation findings; and recommendations. (DB)

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OREA Report

SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL ARTICULATION PROGRAM PHASE I: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION 1990-91

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SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL
ARTICULATION PROGRAM
PHASE I: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION
1990-91

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5/92

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Special Education School Articulation Program is a program for students with handicapping conditions, designed to ensure that they are offered access to all high school programs by promoting informed choice on the part of students and parents. The program was outlined in Special Circular No. 8 issued by the Chancellor's office on September 30, 1990.

The circular introduced four major initiatives to be implemented during the 1990-91 school year: the establishment of a Borough Articulation Advisory Committee (BAAC) to include various special education staff members, parents, and borough and district administrators; the development of individual school plans to be implemented subsequent to approval by the high school and district superintendent in consultation with the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee; the allocation of resources for coordination and implementation of articulation programs; and finally, the assignment of a Central Articulation Coordinator and five Borough Articulation Coordinators (BACs) to facilitate collaboration among representatives from the Division of High Schools, the community school districts and the Division of Special Education.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Program planners established the following objectives for the 1990-91 school year:

- By June, 1991 middle and high schools with a special education population will have hired a school articulation coordinator;
- By June, 1991 middle and high schools with a special education population will submit an articulation plan to their respective Borough High School Superintendent or District Superintendent for review and approval.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to survey responses, and information provided to OREA by the Office of High School Special Education Operations, the program was implemented in a timely fashion. In virtually every school, the assignment of school program coordinators was completed well before the June, 1991 deadline. Moreover, a large percentage of schools submitted articulation plans to the Borough Articulation Advisory Committees by January, 1991, and most plans were accepted. All BACs effectively set forth the guidelines for these plans through boroughwide meetings early in the school year, and school program coordinators appeared to have a good grasp of what the program is about.

Based on OREA's more in-depth inquiry into program implementation, the program was off to a quick and energetic start. A large number of schools implementated many articulation activities during the program's first year. This finding must, however, be qualified by the fact it is based on information provided by survey respondents. Some of the BACs reported that there was variation among schools in the speed and thoroughness with which the program was being carried out. This evaluation examined only those schools that returned the survey OREA sent to each school articulation coordinator. Among those, almost every school met or exceeded this year's guidelines for program implementation.

The instructional component of the program, and the implementation of special events, such as intervisitations, have been carried out in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Special Circular No.8. Articulation services to special education students have been enriched and delivered earlier (in pre-articulating as well as articulating years). Programs that involve parents have also been established, but ongoing efforts should be made to increase parental participation.

The annual review conference, as it existed prior to the 1991-92 school year, was not the most appropriate forum for delivering articulation information in a guidance setting, according to school program coordinators who were interviewed. These conferences took place before students knew where they would be attending high school. The School Articulation Coordinators reported that during the 1990-91 school year, articulation services were not provided in the context of the annual review conference, as suggested by Special Circular No. 8. A new collaborative articulation review, scheduled to take place in the spring, was developed for the 1991-92 school year.

The perceptions of the school program coordinators, and the BACs were that the program has already had an important positive impact on students, and that it has filled an important need. Many complained that the time demands of this job, in combination with their other work, were too great. They also reported that they did not receive enough information about special education programs in the high schools. Many cited the dearth of information in the Directory of the Public High Schools issued by the Division of High Schools. Those interviewed did not appear to know about the updated information issued each year by the Office of High School Special Education Operations in collaboration with the superintendents' offices.

In terms of the structural organization of the program, borough officials have filled the administrative role outlined in Special Circular No. 8, both according to their own reports and according to survey responses from school program coordinators. They have served effectively in suggesting new programs,

facilitating communications among schools in their boroughs and served in a problem-solving role. Although they have effectively brought together the coordinators for boroughwide meetings, some coordinators feel they could benefit from more of these meetings. The school program coordinators have frequent and effective lines of communication with the borough and district articulation administrators, and the BACs and the District Administrator of Special Educations have effective communication. Some school program coordinators reported that they have very limited contact with school staff involved in articulation of general education students.

On the basis of these findings OREA makes the following recommendations:

- The division of various staff roles, where the school program coordinators implement the programs, and the Borough Articulation Advisory Committees serve an advisory role, works well and should be preserved.

- Based on expressed needs of school program coordinators, more boroughwide meetings should be planned to offer more opportunities for an exchange of information about programs and strategies for improving articulation.

- Because school program coordinators report that they have not profited from the articulation programs provided for general education students, ideas should be generated, and programs developed to improve within-school communication with regard to articulation activities.

- The annual review conference was not the most appropriate forum for delivering the guidance component of this program. The collaborative articulation conference was developed to address this problem, and its effectiveness should be evaluated at a later date.

- The workload for school program coordinators should be re-evaluated to determine whether the time demands of their jobs are too great.

- School program coordinators should make use of the updated versions of the Directory of the Public High Schools that are developed each year by the Office of High School Special Education Operations in collaboration with the superintendents' offices.

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This report was prepared by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's High School Evaluation Unit (OREA/H.S.E.U.) of the New York City Board of Education under the direction of Dr. Lori Mei. Dr. Ronnie Halperin served as project manager for the coordination of this evaluation, Barbara Dworkowitz edited the report, and Ron Stevens was responsible for the data analysis.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Program Objectives	4
Evaluation Methodology	5
Scope of This Report	7
II. PROGRAM CONCEPT	8
Program Structure	8
Program Description	12
III. PROGRAM FINDINGS	16
Assignment and Formalization of School Program Coordinator's Jobs	16
Development of Special Education Articulation Plan	17
Patterns of Communication	18
Coordination at the Borough Level	21
Articulation Activities	24
Coordination With Articulation Activities in General Education	31
Use of Program Funds	33
School Program Coordinators' Perceptions of Program Impact	34
Problems Cited by School Program Coordinators	38
IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	40

List of Tables

Table		Page
1	Middle School and High School Staff Participants in the Design of the Special Education School Articulation Plan	19
2	Number and Percent of Schools Reporting Involvement of BAC in Designing and Implementing the Articulation Program	23
3	Number and Percent of Middle and High School Programs Offering Various Articulation Programs for the First Time During the 1990-91 School Year	25
4	Number and Percent of Respondents Offering Articulation Activities Separately for Special Education Students 1990-91 School Year	32

I. INTRODUCTION

The Division of High Schools requested that the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) evaluate an articulation program implemented during the 1990-91 school year for students with handicapping conditions entering high school. As outlined in Special Circular No. 8 issued by the Office of the Chancellor on September 13, 1990, a Special Education Articulation Program was created to ensure that students were given information on and access to all high school programs. It also provided resources for collaborative planning among middle schools and high schools to promote successful articulation strategies. The major initiatives introduced by the circular were:

- the establishment of a Borough Articulation Advisory Committee including teachers, counselors, parents, paraprofessionals, supervisors, Committee for Special Education (C.S.E.)/School Based Support Team (S.B.S.T.) personnel, and borough and district administrators;
- the development of individual school plans to be implemented subsequent to approval by the high school and district superintendent in consultation with the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee;
- the allocation of resources for coordination and implementation of the programs; and
- the assignment of a Central Articulation Coordinator and five Borough Articulation Coordinators (BACS) to facilitate collaboration among representatives from the Division of High Schools, the community school districts, and the Division of Special Education.

BACKGROUND

Students with special education needs who attend public schools are served through either resource rooms or in self-

contained classes. Those with mild disabilities attend general education classes throughout most of the day, and receive remediation one period a day in a resource room. Students in need of more extensive services enter the Modified Instructional Setting (MIS) system and attend self-contained classes with a maximum enrollment of 12 students. Students in MIS are classified according to special needs including learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, hearing, or vision problems. The initiatives described by Special Circular No. 8 are directed at students with learning disabilities (MIS I), and emotional problems (MIS II).

Until the fall of 1990, the articulation of students with special educational needs was not addressed through any formal mechanism. Instead, information on special programs and assistance with the application process was managed through whatever program was in place for the students in the general education program. To some extent, the guidance counselor for special education served the students' needs, but no specific provisions were made for this function. Moreover, in many schools where special education is isolated from the general education program, students and staff in special education were not routinely informed about upcoming articulation programs. During recent years, the range of programs available for special education students entering high school has widened. Many vocational-technical schools, educational options schools, and special programs in academic-comprehensive high schools are open

to special education students. However, the Directory of the Public High Schools issued by the Division of High Schools, does not provide enough information for guidance counselors or students to determine whether or not a school or program is appropriate for individual special education students. Moreover, all educational option programs in the New York City school system comply with a policy of randomly selecting one-half of the students seeking admission. This has resulted in many inappropriate placements among special education students.* Consequently, students were frequently directed to their zoned high schools despite the fact that they were eligible for other programs.

Special Circular No. 8 outlines a program that provides resources for helping special education students take advantage of the broad range of high school opportunities that the school system has made available for them. It also outlines the basic elements necessary for successful implementation of any articulation program. The program provides for the development of individual school articulation plans to address the varying needs of student populations, and the variation in opportunities available in different regions.

Special Circular 8 suggests various programmatic elements for middle schools including an instructional component, a

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*Educational options schools may apply their admissions criteria to only 50 percent of the students they admit. The remaining 50 percent of admitted students are selected randomly by computer, based on student preference as indicated on the high school application.

vocational assessment component, and guidance component (originally planned to take place during the annual review conference*). The circular also suggests that middle schools provide separate articulation activities directed at serving the needs of special education students and their parents. This should include visits to high schools, and assistance in completing the high school application, paying particular attention to informing parents of any special programs, and the viability of educational option and vocational-technical high schools for their children.

Circular No. 8 further suggests that high schools develop materials and activities that would enable prospective students and their families to become acquainted with a particular school's programs. Such activities should include hosting visits from middle school students and their families, developing collaborative programs with feeder schools, and becoming involved in the annual review conference.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Program planners established the following objectives for schools with a special education population during the 1990-91 school year:

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*An annual review conference, in which educational goals are outlined, is mandated for every special education student. The annual review conference was rescheduled to take place in the fall during the 1991-92 school year. In addition, a collaborative articulation conference at which articulation to high school is discussed, was scheduled to take place in the spring after students knew which high school he or she would be attending.

- By June 1991, all middle and high schools with a special education population will have hired a School Articulation Coordinator.

- By June 1991, all middle and high schools with a special education population will submit an articulation plan to their respective borough high school superintendent or district superintendent for review and approval.

In addition, OREA has collected data for the first year of the program, to serve as a benchmark to answer the following questions:

- What percent of students in the pre-articulating grade will have received instruction in planning for high school as part of the Home and Career Skills course?

- What percent of students in the pre-articulating grade will have developed a vocational inventory of interests?

- What percent of parents of students in the pre-articulating grade will have attended at least one workshop, individual conference, or visit to a high school?

- What percent of students in the pre-articulating grade will have a pre-terminal annual review which includes articulation information?

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This report, Phase I of a three-phase evaluation, examines the implementation of the Special Education School Articulation Program during the 1990-91 school year.

An OREA evaluator interviewed Special Education Articulation Coordinators at three high schools and three feeder middle schools. Schools were selected by the Borough Articulation Coordinator (BAC) in each borough. Questions focused on program components, and the compliance with guidelines set forth in Special Circular No. 8

In addition, an OREA evaluator interviewed the Borough

Articulation Coordinators from the Superintendents' offices in Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan about staff participation in designing and implementing the program, patterns of communication, and borough- or districtwide articulation activities.

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment also sent a survey to the school program coordinator at each middle school and high school inquiring about program implementation, staff perceptions and patterns of communication among staff. A total of 153 out of 273 (56 percent) surveys were returned. All instruments used for school program coordinators were designed in collaboration with the Office of High School Special Education Operations.

Phase II of the study will examine transfer and attendance patterns during the 1991-92 school year of special education students who benefitted from initiatives introduced under Special Circular No. 8 in 1990-91. Finally, Phase III of the evaluation will consist of a comprehensive examination of the articulation process of special education students from the perspective of middle school, high school, central, and district staff. The purpose of this evaluation is to suggest policy to improve the articulation of special education students at the important juncture between middle school and high school. Phase II of the study will be completed in fall 1992. The Phase III evaluation will be implemented during the 1992-93 school year with a report expected in fall 1993.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Chapter II of this report describes the program structure and activities as prescribed by Special Circular No. 8. Chapter III reports the findings from interviews and surveys, and Chapter IV sets forth OREA's conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM CONCEPT

As outlined in Special Circular No. 8, program planners proposed guidelines and suggested specific initiatives for implementing the Special Education Articulation Program. An ideal articulation program for special education students was visualized containing the following components.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Development and Implementation of Individual School Plans

Each middle school and high school would be responsible for developing an individual school plan which would be implemented subsequent to the approval of the respective high school or district superintendent, in consultation with the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee. The principal was expected to develop the school plan in consultation with the School Articulation Coordinator he or she selects, other school staff involved in special education, and a parent. Per-session time was allotted to the articulation coordinator, and time was made available to augment the program during the school day.

The middle school plans were expected to include an instructional component to orient students to the articulation process, a vocational assessment component, visits to various types of high schools, a parent orientation program, a guidance annual review, and a pre-articulation annual review program. For

students in the articulating year*, the school plan should detail September and October activities that would assist students and parents in completing the high school application. Activities were to include a final review of the appropriateness of each student's application.

High school articulation plans were to provide for visits of pre-articulating middle school students and parents, and for the development of materials and activities that would enable visiting students and their families to become acquainted with the school's programs. These should include audio-visual materials highlighting various school programs, with emphasis on special education. High school special education students should be involved in these activities, which might include pen pal programs or other linkage programs between students. Prizes, buttons, and key rings made in shop by high school students, may be given to visiting students as mementos of their visit. Each high school would be responsible for developing collaborative programs with feeder schools which might include speakers, curricula, and program information. The special circular recommends that high schools work with feeder middle schools to develop joint bridge projects, and that they provide materials and assistance to middle schools for a collaborative annual review conference.

The School Articulation Coordinator was responsible for

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*The articulating year refers to the last school year a student would be spending in middle school. The pre-articulating year is the year prior to that.

implementing the school plan, attending training sessions, and teaching or assisting classroom teachers in presenting the curricular articulation activities. Implementing the school plan would involve such activities as arranging intervisitations with the help of the BAC, reviewing students' records to ensure that they contain all necessary documents, and planning and conducting workshops and individual interviews for parents. In addition, the School Articulation Coordinator should participate in school-based activities dealing with general education articulation activities, and should serve as a member of the school articulation committee.

Coordination at the Level of the Superintendency and Borough

The respective superintendencies and Committees for Special Education were responsible for providing the needed support for the school to develop and implement the plan. The superintendents would be responsible for tracking the implementation of articulation plans, and for keeping files of school plans in their offices. Copies of the plans are to be submitted to the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee for review.

The circular states that a Borough Articulation Advisory Committee should be developed out of the high school superintendent's office, and chaired by the Borough Articulation Coordinator (BAC). The committee should consist of personnel from middle schools and high schools including the District Administrator of Special Education/Executive Assistant of Special

Education; principal; special education supervisor/assistant principal of special education; U.F.T. representative; C.S.A. representative; guidance counselor; School Based Support Team (S.B.S.T.) member; parent representative; bilingual coordinator; special education teacher; School Articulation Coordinator; and C.S.E. chairperson.

The responsibilities of the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee include developing guidelines for borough articulation activities, helping to publicize high school programs, reviewing school articulation plans, disseminating information related to articulation, and preparing committee meeting agendas and minutes. The BAC should provide technical support to the high schools in developing their orientation materials.

Central Coordination

According to Special Circular No. 8, a Central Articulation Coordinator, working with the Division of High Schools (D.H.S.), will oversee the program citywide. He or she will train the BACs in articulation procedures, assist them in establishing their advisory committees, provide them with strategies for staff development and support, and offer an ongoing forum for sharing successful practices. The Central Articulation Coordinator should also serve as a liaison to the Division of Special Education (D.S.E.) and the Office of Student Guidance, to emphasize the needs of special education students in all articulation activities and initiatives. In addition, the coordinator should prepare a newsletter of articulation

activities to be distributed to all middle schools and high schools.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Special education initiatives will affect students from pre-articulation grades six and seven, through the articulation grades of eight or nine. At the sixth grade level, an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.), resulting from the annual review, should reflect the articulation activities to be offered the following year.

Seventh Grade

Special Circular No. 8 suggests that students in the seventh grade receive instruction through Planning for High School* as part of the Home and Career Skills course. The course prepares middle school boys and girls for future responsibilities as family members, wage earners, home managers, and consumers. The circular suggested that the course also include an overview of articulation from middle school to high school, a unit on decision making, a unit on planning for high school, and student projects related to articulation. The program should also provide visits to zoned, vocational-technical and educational option high schools, a review of the Directory of the Public High Schools and mock application materials.

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*Planning for High School: Understanding the High School Application Process is a manual that was written through a collaborative effort of the Office of Student Guidance and Development, Division of High School's Office of Occupational Education, Division of Special Education, Division of Multilingual/Multicultural Education and representatives of various community school districts.

For the vocational exploration component, seventh grade students should prepare an inventory of their interests, skills, and abilities. It is suggested that this inventory be made available to students, their family and support staff during the annual review and guidance annual review conferences.

The seventh grade guidance component should consist of a structured interview conducted by the guidance counselor to assist the student in making an informed decision; a guidance annual review focusing on the student's articulation plans; and the pre-terminal annual review incorporating all information pertaining to student articulation. At the pre-terminal annual review a list of tentative selections of potential high schools should be developed, and a mock application should be reviewed.

It is suggested that parents participate in workshops, individual conferences, and visits to high schools. They should be encouraged to attend the annual Paths To High Schools conference. This citywide event was designed to inform students and their parents about the programs offered at all New York City high schools.

Eighth Grade

According to Special Circular No. 8, in September and October of the eighth grade, classroom instruction should be provided to assist students in finalizing high school choices. Throughout the school year, students should receive instruction related to a successful transition to high school.

The circular also suggests that workshops be provided for

parents of eighth graders to familiarize them with the Directory of the Public High Schools, and inform them about the application process. Parents and students should be encouraged to attend the High School Fair, and an individual should be designated to review every application for completeness and accuracy.

Ongoing linkages should be developed between eighth grade middle school students and high school students, and between middle school and high school personnel. It is suggested that students be encouraged to participate in bridge programs, i.e. transitional programs, developed by the schools, including after-school activities and summer school [e.g. Institute for Career Exploration (ICE)].*

The circular suggested that guidance counselors work with eighth grade students on issues pertaining to the transition to high school. The terminal annual review was originally proposed as the middle school's opportunity to prepare the student for his/her first semester in high school. The high school to which the student had been accepted was to provide the goals and objectives for subjects offered in grades nine and ten, and their schools' Phase I/Phase II Individual Educational Plans (I.E.P.) forms. Special Circular No. 8 suggested that the middle school use these forms to prepare the I.E.P. for the first semester of high school after consultation with the student, parent and high school personnel. However, the process of planning and setting

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*ICE is a summer Chapter 1 program that offers remedial enrichment to middle school students in their transition to high school.

goals for high school was rescheduled to take place during the collaborative articulation review conference. At this conference, a revised and expanded Application Replica* should be completed with input from both middle and high school staff.

During the 1991-92 school year, a new calendar was developed for annual review conferences. These conferences used to take place in the spring, but were now scheduled for the fall. Thus the collaborative articulation review was scheduled for the spring of a student's terminating year, after the student knew what high school he or she would be attending. The collaborative conference is the responsibility of both the middle and high schools, and is intended to serve as a culminating activity for the student and the high school. It is expected that this collaborative effort will ensure that students are prepared for their first semester of high school.

Special Circular No. 8 suggests that students for whom the ninth grade is the articulating grade receive articulation activities through Communications Arts classes.

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*This is a copy of the student's high school application, with a place for entering the grades for the third marking period.

III. PROGRAM FINDINGS

OREA sent 273 surveys to school program coordinators, of which 178 were sent to middle schools and 95 were sent to high schools. Ninety-nine (56 percent) of the middle school coordinators, and 51 (54 percent) of the high school coordinators completed and returned the surveys.

ASSIGNMENT AND FORMALIZATION OF SCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S JOB

During the fall of 1991, the Office of High School Special Education Operations provided OREA with a list of middle schools and high schools serving special education students. Along with each school listing was the name of the coordinator of the Special Education Articulation Program. All of the 95 high schools, and 176 of the 178 middle schools had a designated school program coordinator.

School program coordinators responding to the survey indicated that they began working in their role as early as the fall of 1990. Specifically, 84 percent (N=83) of responding middle schools coordinators and 86 percent (N=44) of responding high school coordinators were working as program articulation coordinators by November 30, 1990; and an additional 14 percent (N=14) of the middle school coordinators and 10 percent (N=5) of the high school coordinators were working in this capacity by January 31, 1991. Only two middle school and two high school coordinators began their work after January. Thus, coordinators were assigned to and began working in the program in a timely fashion.

Among the survey respondents, 54 percent (N=54) of middle school and 43 percent (N=22) of high school coordinators had prior experience participating in an articulation program.

The school program coordinators held job titles as diverse as guidance counselor for special education, school social worker, advisor for special education, compliance coordinator, and English coordinator for special education. One of the coordinators taught two classes per day; the others had no classroom responsibilities. All of the coordinators interviewed said that they had been counseling special education students in articulation, unofficially and without the necessary resources and support systems, prior to the start of the program. They felt that the program provided some of the needed financial support for obtaining materials and allowing coordinating staff to attend meetings. Moreover, they felt that the program afforded them recognition for an important component of their job, although they felt that the job required much more time than was formally allotted.

DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ARTICULATION PLAN

A program objective for the 1990-91 school year was that each school would submit an articulation plan to the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee by June 1991. The vast majority of schools developed their articulation plans in a timely fashion. Among school program coordinators from the middle schools, 32 percent (N=32) said they actually submitted their articulation plans to the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee

by November 30, 1990, and an additional 54 percent (N=54) said they submitted their plans by January 31, 1991. Only three percent (N=3) of the coordinators said that they had not submitted a plan by June, 1991. Similarly, among the school program coordinators from high schools, 45 percent (N=23) submitted plans by November 30, 1990 with an additional 39 percent (N=20) submitting plans by January 31, 1991. The remaining 12 percent (N=6) reported that they had submitted their plans by March 31, 1991.

Middle school and high school coordinators reported that special education staff was heavily involved in designing and developing their school's special education articulation plan. As indicated in Table 1, assistant principals or site supervisors for special education were most frequently involved, followed by special education guidance counselors and teachers. In addition, 61 percent of the middle school respondents and 67 percent of the high school respondents said the BAC played an extensive role in designing the articulation program in their school.

Most plans were quickly approved by the Borough Articulation Advisory Committees. In all, 96 percent of middle school plans and 98 percent of high school articulation plans were approved by the Borough Articulation Advisory Committees by the end of the year. In fact, approximately 91 percent of these plans were approved by March 31, 1991, before the deadline.

PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION

A large percentage of middle school program coordinators

Table 1

Middle School and High School Staff
Participants in the Design of the Special Education
School Articulation Plan

	Middle Schools		High Schools	
Participants	N	%	N	%
A.P. or site supervisor for special education	75	75	50	98
Guidance counselor for special education	69	69	31	61
Other guidance counselors	23	23	9	18
Special education teachers	55	55	31	61
Other teachers	15	15	12	24
Parents	32	32	16	31
Principal	28	28	22	43
S.B.S.T. members	26	26	20	40
District/borough officials	24	24	13	26
Representatives from other schools	18	18	12	24
Others	12	12	4	8

- Guidance counselors for special education, special education teachers, and assistant principals or site supervisors for special education were most prominently involved in designing schools' Special Education Articulation Plan.

reported that they communicated with school staff such as site supervisors or assistant principals for special education (84 percent), guidance counselors (83 percent), special education school articulation coordinators from other schools (82 percent), special education teachers (71 percent), members of the S.B.S.T. (57 percent), and BACs (45 percent). A smaller percentage reported that they communicated with the District Administrator for Special Education (36 percent), bilingual staff (20 percent), and the executive assistant for special education (9 percent).

Similar communication patterns were seen among high school respondents. They reported frequent communications with site supervisors or assistant principals for special education (94 percent), guidance counselors (78 percent), members of the S.B.S.T., and special education teachers (55 percent) respectively, the BAC (51 percent), and special education school articulation coordinators from other schools (45 percent). In addition, 26 percent communicated with the executive assistant for special education, and 22 percent discussed articulation matters with bilingual staff.

Middle school program coordinators thought the lines of communication needed improvement between schools (45 percent), between special education staff and other school staff (36 percent), within the special education department of their school (18 percent), between their school and borough/district staff (18 percent), between their school and the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee (18 percent), and between school staff and

school administrators (11 percent). Twenty percent reported that they had no problems with communication.

High school staff felt they needed improved communication between special education staff and other school staff (69 percent), between staff at their school and at other schools (51 percent), between their school and the borough/district office (18 percent), between their school and the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee members (18 percent), between their schools and the school administrators (14 percent), and with the special education department in their school (12 percent). Sixteen percent said they had no problems with communication.

Middle school staff reported communicating about special education articulation with an average of 6.5 different schools, while high schools averaged contact with 10 different schools. Contacts were most often made by telephone.

COORDINATION AT THE BOROUGH LEVEL

OREA evaluated the coordination of at the borough level from the perspectives of both the school program coordinators and the BACs. They asked the school program coordinators about the role played by the BACs, and their own roles, in designing and implementing the articulation program.

The school program coordinators reported that the BACs played a directive and facilitative role in the design of the articulation program. In most cases, the BAC suggested programs, set deadlines, and solved problems. Some also facilitated arrangements for events involving parents including visits to

high schools by students and parents.

About one-half of middle school (48 percent) and high school (51 percent) respondents reported that the BAC played an extensive role in implementing the articulation program in their school. Table 2 shows the number and percent of respondents who reported that the BAC contributed to specific aspects of the program design and implementation. The school program coordinators reported that the planning of the actual program activities, was rightly left to them.

The perceptions of the Borough Articulation Coordinators themselves were very much in agreement with those of the school program coordinators. The BACs described their roles as administrative, and their responsibilities as setting forth guidelines, disseminating information, suggesting programs, monitoring program implementation, and bringing coordinators from different schools together. In some instances, BACs reported that the schools in their boroughs varied a great deal in the extent to which they complied with Special Circular No. 8 guidelines regarding program content, timeliness of program implementation, and utilization of services provided by their superintendent's office.

The Borough Articulation Advisory Committee, chaired by the Borough Articulation Coordinator (BAC), had been constituted in accordance with guidelines set forth in Special Circular No. 8. The extent to which the committee as a group, or the BAC administered the articulationprogram also varied across

Table 2

Number and Percent of Schools Reporting Involvement of BAC in Designing and Implementing the Articulation Program

Activities	Middle Schools N	Middle Schools %	High Schools N	High Schools %
Available to answer questions	73	73	45	88
Suggested programs	67	67	36	71
Facilitated communication between middle schools and high schools	57	57	35	69
Helped develop a timeline for instituting program	35	35	29	57
Answered technical questions about implementation of plan	29	29	19	37
Arranged parent visits to high schools	15	15	11	22
Arranged student visits to high schools	14	14	12	24
Played no significant role	10	10	4	8
Arranged high school staff visits to middle schools	9	9	12	24
Other	7	7	2	4

- In general, middle schools and high schools reported that the Borough Articulation Coordinators (BACs) played an advisory and facilitating role, rather than a role in the actual implementation of the program activities.

boroughs. The Brooklyn BAC reported that her most critical communications had been with the District Administrators of Special Education. These communication lines were well established, and allowed easy contact with middle schools. Thus the administration of the program was efficient and effective. She added that communication with school program coordinators had been less frequent. Many BACs and school program coordinators alike reported that there had not been a sufficient number of boroughwide meetings.

In addition to the activities initiated by individual schools, there were a number of boroughwide programs. These included fairs and expositions exclusively for special education programs. The school program coordinators announced these programs to students and sent mailings home for parents, but some felt that the attendance did not meet their expectations and hopes. It should be noted, however, that in most cases, this was the first year that any outreach efforts for articulation programs were directed at this population.

ARTICULATION ACTIVITIES

The survey responses indicated that many articulation activities were introduced to special education students for the first time during the 1990-91 school year. Table 3 presents the number and percent of schools that offered various articulation activities for the first time.

Intervisitations

Among the most important changes in providing special

Table 3

Number and Percent of Middle and High School Programs Offering Various Articulation Programs for the First Time During the 1990-91 School Year

	Middle Schools		High Schools	
Activities	N	%	N	%
Visits to high schools	66	66	38	75
Workshops for parents	53	53	22	43
Visits from high school representatives	51	51	34	67
Video tapes and/or other audiovisual materials	43	43	32	63
Pen pal and/or other linkage programs	8	8	21	41
Other	20	20	10	20

- Of the 99 middle school and 51 high school respondents, more than half indicated that their school offered three different articulation activities to special education students for the first time during the 1990-91 school year.

education students with information about specific high schools was the marked increase in the number of opportunities for these students and their parents to visit high schools. The school program coordinator at one junior high school in Manhattan said that this year, one-third of all seventh graders and all eighth graders had visited at least two high schools, and two seventh graders had visited eight high schools. In past years, students in pre-articulating grades never visited high schools, and special education students in the articulating grades did so very infrequently. Middle school survey respondents reported that their school offered an average of 3.8 opportunities for special education students to visit high schools. Only four schools offered none.

Two components of intervisitation that were offered by the high schools were school tours for prospective applicants and their parents (which included summer orientation programs for entering students), and visits to middle schools by a high school representative to talk about the program. High school tours included the distribution of key chains, pads, and other trinkets with the school name. According to survey responses, the high schools provided a mean of 5.7 opportunities for middle school students to visit during the 1990-91 school year. Only one high school provided none, and one other was still in the process of developing several linkage programs. Representative from high schools visiting middle schools usually spoke at school assemblies. They talked about what the high school expected of students in terms of behavior and attitude, and the requirements

for a diploma. One high school program coordinator mentioned that she had never visited middle schools prior to this year, and that this year she had visited about a dozen schools.

Activities For Parents

Middle school survey respondents reported that their school offered an average of 3.4 articulation activities for parents during the 1990-91 school year. Outreach efforts were made through the distribution of newsletters and special mailings. School staff attending activities for parents usually included the special education articulation coordinator, special education teachers, guidance counselors for special education and the assistant principal or site supervisor for special education. Most activities for parents took place during weekday days (83 percent) or weekday evenings (71 percent). Staff members were introduced to parents, and activities focused on providing general information about high school, as well as specific high school programs. Discussions included the emotional adjustment many students experience upon entering high school, and how to cope with it.

One junior high school offered a program called High School Awareness Night, and an early morning program. The morning program allowed parents and students to come in before the start of the work day to get assistance in filling out the high school application. Students and parents were assisted in using a strategy of listing several choices in order of preference, and in reaching a consensus about the choice before filling out the application. At both the night and morning meetings, people

shared responsibility for babysitting allowing parents with younger children to attend.

High school visitations were among the activities offered to parents as well as students. Among survey respondents, 44 percent of the middle schools invited parents to all visits to high schools, 38 percent invited parents to some visits, and 15 percent did not invite parents to attend any of the visits to high schools. Fifty-one percent of high school respondents said parents were invited to all the visits to their schools, 39 percent said parents were invited to some of the visits, and eight percent said parents were not invited to any of the visits. The majority of middle schools (68 percent) reported that they attracted no more than 25 percent of the parents through these activities. An additional 13 percent said they reached between 25 and 50 percent of the parents. Only 12 percent reported reaching more than 50 percent of the parents.

High schools reported that they offered an average of 3.6 articulation activities for parents during the 1990-91 school year. Outreach efforts were made through newsletters, mailings and P.T.A. meetings. Most activities for parents took place during weekday days (61 percent) or weekday evenings (59 percent). The focus of the activities for parents was on providing information about their specific high school, introducing school staff, and to a lesser extent, providing general information about high schools, and discussing student adjustment.

Instructional Activities

The instructional component of the articulation program was infused into several courses beginning as early as the sixth grade. These courses included Home and Career Skills, Introduction to Technology, language arts, and social studies. Students were taught about community institutions, vocational choices, and writing and computer skills. Seventy-four middle school coordinators (75 percent) reported that articulation activities took place in the Home and Career Skills course. The remaining middle schools coordinators stated that articulation activities took place in other courses too.

Forty-four percent of the 99 middle school respondents, and 35 percent of the 51 high school respondents reported that a system promoting curriculum alignment between middle and high school subject areas had been put in place during the school year.

Guidance Activities

Special Circular No. 8 suggested that the pre-terminal annual review conference incorporate information pertaining to student articulation, including a tentative selection of potential high schools with the student and parent, and a review of a mock application. The circular also recommended that a terminal annual review conference prepare the student for the first semester in his/her high school and include the high school's input.

None of the three school program coordinators interviewed

felt that the annual review conference was an appropriate setting for providing articulation services. It was necessary to use this conference to assess students' strengths, weaknesses and accomplish ments, and to set goals and objectives. Also, the annual review conferences were now scheduled for the fall.

Consequently, the Office of High School Special Education Operations developed a collaborative articulation conference in which middle and high school staff meet with students and parents. This conference, to be formally instituted during the 1991-92 school year, would be scheduled in the spring of a student's terminating year. At this collaborative conference, an Application Replica, expanded to include the third marking period grades would be used, and activities would focus on the student's first semester in high school.

However, during 1990-91 about 67 percent of responding middle school program coordinators said that articulation activities took place in the context of the annual review conference for the pre-articulating and articulating years. Among the high schools, 22 (43 percent), and 13 (25 percent) said they participated in articulation activities during pre-articulating and articulating review conferences, respectively.

Finally, the establishment of the articulation program enabled counselors to run programs in conjunction with other schools. Thus, programs like high school fairs for special education students were offered in many boroughs/districts, and citywide.

COORDINATION WITH ARTICULATION ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL EDUCATION

The school program coordinators interviewed reported that prior to Special Circular No. 8 there were no separate articulation activities for special education students. Although special education students were permitted to take part in the articulation activities offered for general education students, there were no formal procedures, and special education staff and students were often left uninformed. The needs of the special education population were not being met through articulation activities offered to general education students.

After implementation of the Special Education Articulation Program, OREA inquired about the extent to which articulation activities specifically targeted special education students. Table 4 presents the number and percent of schools that offered various articulation activities for special education students. All but three middle schools and two high schools reported that they offered a wide range of articulation activities just for special education students.

While initiating a separate articulation program for special education students was the primary focus of this year's activities, some school program coordinators stated that some activities should be integrated with those offered to general education students. One school program coordinator thought that the articulation activities at her school were too isolated from those in general education, and that one of her goals for next year was to integrate some of the articulation activities she conducted this year with those in general education.

Table 4

Number and Percent of Respondents Offering Articulation Activities Separately for Special Education Students 1990-91 School Year

	Middle Schools		High Schools	
Activities	N	%	N	%
Visits to high schools	81	81	31	61
Classroom curriculum	66	66	29	57
Workshops for parents	58	58	23	45
Visits from high school representatives	50	50	22	43
Parent visits to high schools	37	37	24	47
Audiovisual materials	33	33	24	47
No activities offered separately	3	3	2	4

- Of the 99 middle school and 51 high school respondents, most offered articulation activities for special education students separately from students in general education.

OREA inquired about whether school program coordinators participated in schoolwide efforts related to articulation. Among survey respondents, 19 percent (N=19) of middle school and 24 percent (N=12) of high school coordinators said that they did not represent the special education articulation program on any other school or borough committee related to articulation.

USE OF PROGRAM FUNDS

OREA inquired about how, and to what extent, school program coordinators used their per session and Other Than Personnel Services (O.T.P.S.) allotments. Seventy-five percent of middle school coordinators and 86 percent of high school coordinators said they used all or most of their per session allotment. Approximately one-half the middle school respondents, and between 40 and 60 percent of the high school respondents said that they had used their per session allotments for parent meetings, individual parent/student conferences, and training sessions. About one-half of the middle school respondents, and 80 percent of high school respondents said they had used some of the allotment for collaborative planning sessions. Six percent of middle school respondents and less that one percent of high school respondents said they had not been told about per session allotments.

In general, high school program coordinators used their O.T.P.S. funds to a greater extent than those in the middle schools. Fifty-nine percent of middle school respondents and 81 percent of high school respondents reported using some or all of their O.T.P.S. allotment. Thirty-nine percent of middle school

respondents and 18 percent of high school respondents reported that they had not used their funds or were not informed about the allotment.

Approximately half the middle school and high school respondents said they used their O.T.P.S. allotment for instructional materials. Middle school respondents also used these funds for postage (19 percent), collations (13 percent), or other purposes (seven percent). Similarly, high school respondents used their funds for collations (37 percent), postage (26 percent), and other purposes (26 percent).

SCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM IMPACT

Prior to the establishment of the Special Education School Articulation Program, much of the articulation counseling in the middle schools involved walking students through the Directory of Public High Schools, which, in some cases was misleading, and in other cases lacked information about special education programs. The strategy used prior to the initiation of the program, of trying to match a student's strengths and interests with program descriptions provided by the Directory was, in most cases, unsuccessful. Finally, few if any articulation services were offered to special education students in the pre-articulating year.

Beyond the Directory, issued by the Division of High Schools, some school program coordinators reported that there were no sources of information available for middle school staff to refer to, either to survey special education options, or to find answers to specific questions that arose in the course of

their individual counseling of students. The staff had not been aware of the annual update on special education issued by the Office of High School Special Education Operations. There was no established network on the district, borough, or citywide level for articulation of special education students. Finally, there was no centralized person or office to call if a problem arose.

As a result, high school staff believed middle school staff had serious misconceptions about the programs offered in high schools. Moreover, they felt that they had no mechanism for transmitting information about their programs for special education students.

The school program coordinators at the middle schools pointed to several important changes that resulted from the establishment of the Special Education Articulation Program. First, having the names of contact people (i.e., the special education school articulation coordinators) at other schools enabled them to gather general information about various special education programs, and obtain answers to questions about specific schools. Second, having a person in the superintendent's office (i.e., the BAC) to call about general and individual student problems was critical. Some of the problems that arose for special education students, such as assignments of students to inappropriate schools, had to be handled on a case-by-case basis, and in the past required that the guidance counselor navigate his or her way through a complex web of computerized and bureaucratic systems.

The school program coordinator at one junior high school

said that many of the articulation activities were the same as prior to the start of the Special Education Articulation Program, but that the number of students who were able to participate had increased. The most important change she cited was the inclusion of students in the pre-articulating grade. Prior to the start of the program, only students in the articulating grades were exposed to articulation activities. This school program coordinator also ran more programs involving parents in the articulation process. Sixty-five percent of middle school survey respondents said they believed the initiatives instituted under Special Circular No. 8 improved articulation for special education students, 11 percent saw very little or no improvement, and 23 percent felt it was too soon to tell.

Similarly, among high school respondents, 79 percent felt it led to improved articulation for special education students, 19 percent felt that it was too soon to determine the impact of the initiative, and 2 percent saw little or no improvement. Among those interviewed, the high school special education staff felt that an important impact of Special Circular No. 8 was that they finally had a mechanism for accurately and comprehensively representing their programs to middle school staff and students. They believed that this would lead to more appropriate applications to their programs, and ultimately to better high school attendance. One coordinator reported that applications from special education students were already up this year.

In general, the coordinators felt that the program's impact was significant because students would be placed in more

appropriate high schools, and students would find the transition to high school easier. Coordinators reported less success in getting the parents involved in the high school selection process. Although they offered programs for parents, attendance was generally quite poor. One coordinator suggested that parents be paid to attend articulation activities. However, another school program coordinator felt that the Special Education Articulation Program was successful in removing the stigma associated with the special education status, and felt that it made headway in involving students and parents in a major life decision.

All of the school program coordinators interviewed felt that the goals set forth in Special Circular No. 8 were realistic and filled an important need. They believed that the articulation programs in their boroughs met the goals for the first year.

Seventy percent of middle school coordinators and 61 percent of high school coordinators said they believed that the system now gave special education students adequate opportunities to apply to schools other than their zoned high school. Seventy-three percent of middle school coordinators and 59 percent of high school coordinators felt the public school system offered special education students viable alternatives to their zoned high school. Thirty-nine percent of middle school and 88 percent of high school coordinators reported that they thought more special education students were accepted to their schools of choice this year than in previous years.

PROBLEMS CITED BY SCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Coordinators pointed to some administrative problems with the program. They thought the time allotted for doing the job was not sufficient to allow them to meet all students' needs satisfactorily, and that the workload was unmanageable. It was unclear whether this problem solely involved the responsibilities of being school coordinator of special education, or included their other job responsibilities as well. Coordinators also needed more flexibility in receiving compensation for attending after-school meetings because they found it difficult to schedule meetings with articulation coordinators from other schools during school hours.

Some of the school program coordinators who were interviewed said that they were not provided with enough information about how to access O.T.P.S. and per-session funds allotted to the program. However, since the survey responses discussed earlier in this report indicate that these funds were utilized, it is likely that the problem was ameliorated during the time between the interviews (March and April 1991) and the completion of the surveys (June 1991).

Coordinators also cited specific problems about the mechanisms through which they were able to gather information about high school programs for special education students. One coordinator said that having teachers as coordinators of some programs was problematic because teachers were difficult to reach by telephone during the day, when information was most needed.

Coordinators also said that there was a dearth of information from other sources, and that finding out about high school programs was still more difficult than it should be. One coordinator thought a video about special education options in high school should be produced and distributed.

The high school articulation program coordinators felt that the Special Education Articulation Program made great strides in dispelling myths about diploma requirements for special education students, and in providing an opportunity for distributing information about their programs. They felt, however, that they needed more direct communication with middle school staff including feedback on the effectiveness of their efforts. These high school coordinators also said they would like more direction from the Borough Articulation Advisory Committee about articulation programs, the facilitation of communication with middle school staff, and would welcome more suggestions about individual programs.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to survey responses, and information provided to OREA by the Office of High School Special Education Operations, the program was implemented in a timely fashion. All BACs effectively set forth the guidelines for these plans through boroughwide meetings early in the school year, and school program coordinators appeared to have a good grasp of what the program is about. In virtually every school, the assignment of school program coordinators was completed well before the June 1991 deadline. Moreover, a large percentage of schools submitted articulation plans to the Borough Articulation Advisory Committees by January, 1991, and the plans were, by and large, accepted.

Based on OREA's more in-depth inquiry into program implementation, the program was off to a quick and energetic start. A large number of schools implemented many articulation activities during the program's first year. This finding must, however, be qualified by the fact that it is based on information provided by survey respondents. It is likely, based on the claims of the BACs, that there is a great deal of variation among schools in the speed and thoroughness with which the program is being carried out. It is also possible that the schools that did not respond have moved more slowly in implementing their programs. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of responding schools have met or exceeded this year's guidelines for program implementation.

The instructional component of the program, and the implementation of special events, such as intervisitations, have been implemented in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Special Circular No.8, resulting in enriched articulation services to special education students. These services were also delivered earlier (in pre-articulating as well as articulating years) than they have been in previous years. Mechanisms for parental involvement have also been established, but additional efforts need to be made in this area.

The annual review conference, as proposed in Special Circular No. 8, was not the most appropriate forum for delivering articulation information in a guidance setting. The annual review conference had been moved to the fall, and a collaborative articulation conference was scheduled in the spring of a student's terminating year. Both middle and high schools were responsible for this collaborative conference, and students knew what high school they would be attending the following year. This change in delivering articulation-related guidance services is expected to ameliorate the problems of timing in the original plan.

BACs and school program coordinators agreed that the program had a positive impact on students, and has filled an important need. However, the amount of work appears to be unmanageable for the school program coordinators.

Borough and district officials have filled the administrative role outlined in Special Circular No. 8, both

according to their own reports and according to survey responses from school program coordinators. They have effectively suggested new programs, facilitated communications among schools in their boroughs and served in a problem-solving role. Although they have brought together the coordinators for boroughwide meetings, coordinators felt that they could benefit from more of these meetings in the future. The school program coordinators had frequent and effective lines of communication with the borough articulation administrators. In addition, the BACs and the District Administrator of Special Educations had good lines of communication. Several school program coordinators reported that they had very limited contact with school staff involved in articulation of general education students.

On the basis of these findings OREA makes the following recommendations:

- The division of various staff roles, where the school program coordinators implement the programs, and the Borough Articulation Advisory Committees serve an advisory role, works well and should be preserved.

- Based on expressed needs of school program coordinators, more boroughwide meetings should be planned for staff, and mechanisms should be developed to enhance communication between staff at different schools.

- Because school program coordinators report that they have not profited from the articulation programs provided for general education students, ideas should be generated, and programs developed to improve within-school communication with regard to articulation activities.

- The annual review conference was not the most appropriate forum for delivering the guidance component of this program. The collaborative articulation conference was developed to address this problem, and its effectiveness should be evaluated at a later date.

- The workload for school program coordinators should be re-evaluated to determine whether the time demands of their jobs are too great.

- School program coordinators should make use of the updated versions of the High School Directory that are developed each year by the Office of High School Special Education Operations in collaboration with the superintendents' offices.